

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and study of old-time dime and nickel novels, popular story papers, series books, and pulp magazines

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## STRATEMEYER EDITION



Edward Stratemeyer in 1891

This portrait accompanied the installments of "Jack the Inventor; or, The Trials and Triumphs of a Y Machinist" which appeared in *The Holiday*, April 25 to June 3, 1891. Editor: Edward S. Ellis. The serial was published in its entirety in *Good News*, January 23-April 2, 1892.



## THE HITCHING POST

Perhaps the most influential figure in the field of juvenile series fiction was **Edward Stratemeyer**. Few of us need to be reminded of what he accomplished through his own books and those produced by his Literary Syndicate. In this anniversary year of *Dime Novel Round-Up* we are proud to devote most of the pages of the current issue to articles about Stratemeyer and his world. The lead article by Ilana Nash was a paper read at the most recent Popular Culture Association conference in Las Vegas. It is followed by three articles describing a unique glimpse into the fabled Stratemeyer Archives now housed in the New York Public Library. We are grateful to Mimi Bowling, Special Collections, New York Public Library, for permission to publish these reports.

Many of our regular features have had to be delayed until the October issue, including "Books and Periodicals Received," "Fulminations," and "Adventure Parade." Next time we resume the account of Prof. Bartok's scientific marvels, look at the pulp fiction of George F. Worts, and view the Jesse James phenomenon through the eyes of a folklorist.

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# The Lady and the Press: Harriet Adams Courts America

Ilana Nash  
Los Angeles, CA

Do I contradict myself?  
Very well then I contradict myself,  
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)  
—Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself"

As head of the Stratemeyer Syndicate, the company responsible for creating America's best-selling children's series books, Harriet Adams spent much of her life dealing with the press. The interviews she granted during her half-century tenure with the Syndicate present a fascinating portrait of a woman who was charming, warm and dedicated to her family, yet simultaneously capable of startling dishonesty, primness and, occasionally, self-congratulation. Despite—or perhaps because of—her desire to control her public image, Adams emerges in her own words as a woman at once maddening and lovable.

She began modestly enough, not even granting regular interviews until 1967. During the preceding thirty-seven years, she usually declined to be quoted directly for the handful of articles written about her syndicate in the popular press. The (in)famous article "For It Was Indeed He," in the April 1934 issue of *Fortune* is known to have displeased her, partly because the magazine borrowed precious family photographs and returned them cropped and mutilated. This experience may have contributed to her decision not to give journalists much access to her life or business, although she did make a few exceptions.

Her first interview in a major newspaper seems to be a piece for the *New York Herald Tribune* in 1946. Journalist Gordon Allison refers to upcoming Syndicate projects but he doesn't mention by name a single current Syndicate series with the exception of the Bobbsey Twins. He explains Adams' reticence:

The suspicion is rarely present that a series could have been written by as many as six authors using one name. To tip the syndicate's hand by identifying titles and authors would be as shattering a blow as telling the truth about Santa Claus.<sup>1</sup>

Awareness of public perception influenced what Adams did say, as well as what she didn't. This article contains an early example of the standard Syndicate history-lesson that had already appeared in other articles and which resurfaced

in nearly all Adams' later interviews. Shy about discussing herself and her properties, she could be quite voluble about her father, although the information was carefully pre-packaged. Stratemeyer himself had routinely recited certain salient facts about his career, which Adams repeated; these included his writing 100-200 books before starting the Syndicate and completing 700 or 800 before his death (the numbers changed sometimes in the telling). These statistics, along with such legends as Stratemeyer's writing his first story on brown wrapping paper and his mother's invention of the Winfield pseudonym, may have been true or based on truth, but they were so regularly repeated, often with minor alterations, that they began to take on the gloss of fiction. Whether silent or loquacious, Adams kept a firm grip on what amount and what kind of information the press received.

While her recitation of the "facts" of Stratemeyer's life remained constant in all her interviews, Adams' claims of authorship changed drastically. In her few early interviews, she never claimed to have written any Syndicate books. Even when the Syndicate sought publicity in 1954 to launch the Tom Swift, Jr., series, Adams continued to describe herself as only performing an organizational and administrative role. *Time* magazine reported that the Syndicate had hired both "technical advisors" and ghostwriters to help with the scientific books.<sup>2</sup> As late as 1961, when the *Tacoma News Tribune* wrote an article on the Syndicate and named Nancy Drew specifically, it reported that Adams "plots stories and visualizes characters. Then she and several assistants write the stories."<sup>3</sup> Adams had personally written several volumes in various series when this article was published; she could justifiably have claimed sole credit for those, but she chose not to.

Within seven years however, in her next known comments, she was claiming full credit for the entire Nancy Drew and Dana Girls series.<sup>4</sup> It is unclear exactly when or why she changed her story so radically. As collectors and researchers know, Adams was taking credit for dozens of books written by Mildred Wirt, Walter Karig and Leslie McFarlane. In 1977, Adams wrote a short piece for *TV Guide* in which she addressed the authorship issue:

Skeptics find it hard to believe that one man and his daughter could have concocted so many story ideas, plots, characters and exciting episodes without the assistance of others. But is true.<sup>5</sup>

Although she was usually careful to credit her father with writing the first three Nancy Drew titles, even this story altered as the years passed. Starting in 1979, Adams told various reporters that she had actually written the first three Drews based on "drafts" found among her father's papers when he died.<sup>6</sup> This version,

however, may be attributable to her increasingly flawed memory as she grew older.

Many of Adams' remarks about Edward Stratemeyer fluctuated between reverence and resentment in several interviews. She religiously celebrated his professional accomplishments, but sometimes hinted at his limitations as a parent. When a children's group interviewed her in 1977 and asked if she had been as close to her father as Nancy Drew was to hers, Adams replied, "No, not that close ... I had a very strict father."<sup>7</sup> She told another reporter: "My father ... thought I should stay at home and learn to keep house. He never encouraged me in writing."<sup>8</sup> In another interview, she observed:

My father was quite old-fashioned and very strict. I put my Nancy Drew much more out on her own [than I was]. She is what I would have liked to be.<sup>9</sup>

She would frequently remark on the irony that she was now running the family business when her father had never allowed her to do more than edit manuscripts—and then only at home, not in the office. Another subtle jibe at Edward Stratemeyer emerged in 1978, when a local paper reported that a Massachusetts library had banned Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys because of their low literary merit:

Mrs. Adams ... disagreed with the librarian's assessment. She said they may have been badly written when her father, Edward Stratemeyer, started writing them in 1927, but she's changed all that. "Being a Wellesley graduate majoring in English, I was able to do that," she said.<sup>10</sup>

Her admiration for her father remained untarnished, however. She often spoke with pride of following in his footsteps, and once told a reporter that Nancy Drew is not really a "feminist," because "she has great respect for her father and would never overrule him."<sup>11</sup> It's worth noting that, when Adams created the Dana Girls in 1934, she named the girls' aunt and uncle Harriet and Ned (an old-fashioned nickname for Edward). Three years later she again used the name Ned when creating a boyfriend for her self-proclaimed alter ego, Nancy Drew. In 1974 a journalist noted that Adams was clearly "still in awe of her father," and that she planned to write a biography of him.<sup>12</sup> This project was never completed.

One effect of Adams' strict upbringing was that she led a very sheltered life, a background often reflected in her personality. An editor at Grosset & Dunlap, Doris Duenewald, once said: "Harriet had her own little world—and it was a lovely one."<sup>13</sup> Adams told *Newsday* in 1968 that the age of Nancy Drew's



readership was steadily dropping:

Nowadays they seem to be graduating to adult literature about age 13 and I think that's regrettable; the childhood of a child is so short today. All those pressures—school, athletics, singing lessons, dancing lessons, skiing lessons even. Oh yes, and straight A's in everything.<sup>14</sup>

It's rather endearing that in 1968—an era of psychedelic drugs, free love and urban unrest—Adams' notion of the "pressures" facing teenagers were the kind that Nancy Drew might have. Her gentility occasionally led her to a surprising level of naïveté, and even self-righteousness. One article quoted Adams' description of her work habits:

"I can write a book in two weeks," she says, "but I like two or three months better." A writer like Hemingway who is reported to have written only four hours a day "probably wasted his time drinking," Mrs. Adams feels.<sup>15</sup>

Amazingly, Adams seems to have begun her life as a tomboy, more like George Fayne than proper Nancy Drew. She told one reporter that, when she was a little girl she was "the best one-handed fence vaulter in the neighborhood—and much more interested in playing boys' games than in playing dolls."<sup>16</sup> By the time she reached adulthood, however, Adams was every inch a lady. She liked to tell the story of a fan who had asked for a souvenir—a pencil that Laura Lee Hope had chewed while writing. As Adams said, "I couldn't send him one because I *never* chew my pencil. I admit I might place it near my mouth ... but it never goes inside."<sup>17</sup> When *Rolling Stone* did a lavish article on the Hardy Boys and the Syndicate, the writer was frank about his inability to interview Adams personally. Although she had initially consented, she'd never heard of the magazine before:

Her secretary went out and bought her a copy, which happened to be last fall's "men's issue" and included articles and illustrations on sexual themes. Mrs. Adams canceled the interview.<sup>18</sup>

Adams' conservative sensibilities shaped her views on the state of her profession; she repeatedly told interviewers that she disapproved of the trend of "reality fiction" for children that began in the late 1960s. Books that dealt with teen suicide, drug abuse or pregnancy, she felt, were inappropriate for young readers, despite the fact that these problems were increasingly threatening America's youth at the time. But her chaste relationship with social reality was displayed to its greatest detriment in her comments about race and ethnicity. In a 1979 interview, she explained why she had had to revise the older volumes in her major series:





In the '40s we had all the ethnic groups after us ... We got letters from German groups and French groups and Chinese groups who didn't want their dialects in the stories. Oh, I was in despair at one point. I said that the only villain we can have now is a good old American. I will admit though that I find it hard to read some of the original Bobbsey Twins because the colored dialect is so hard unless you're used to it.<sup>19</sup>

Her attitudes were less the result of active racism, however, than of simple naïveté. She honestly seemed not to know what different races were like, or what realities they lived with. She once told a journalist about her days as an active member of various charities and clubs; as the journalist says,

Perfectly ingenuous and seemingly unaware of the differences between her life and theirs, she tells a story of walking from her house to a woman's club and watching black domestic workers on their way home.

"They had worked all day, but they weren't tired," she says. "They were singing as they went home. It inspired me to write a poem called, 'And they crooned in the afternoon.'"<sup>20</sup>

"Her own little world," indeed. Although nothing can ameliorate the effects of prejudice for those who have experienced it, it is important to distinguish between its different motives. Adams' form of prejudice, it seems to me, was clearly the result of ignorance, not hatred. In none of her interviews did she ever express a negative opinion about any minorities. This fact does not improve Adams' remarks, but it does suggest that they were not intended maliciously.

We must remember, too, that Adams' old-fashioned values had many frankly positive aspects, notably her commitment to her family and her strong work-ethic, neither of which seems to have been sacrificed for the other. What makes Adams particularly fascinating is the ability she had for juggling family concerns with her work; in an era when married women simply did not have careers, Adams managed to run a large corporation while assiduously maintaining her responsibilities to her husband and children.<sup>21</sup> A semi-regular feature of Adams' interviews was an account of the decisions she had to face when Edward Stratemeyer died:

I was 38 when he died and my youngest child was still a baby. But my husband and I talked it over and he agreed with me. I would write. I had very good help for the children and instead of going to New York as my father had, I got an office nearby, 15 minutes away by car, in East Orange. Oh, it was a radical thing to do all right, and some of my friends didn't think I should work. But my children have all turned out



all right, so I guess I was right!<sup>22</sup>

Respect for her family may also have influenced Adams' decision to wait until 1967 before granting extensive interviews, since by then her children were grown and her husband had died the previous year. She told a reporter years later about her marriage with Russell Adams:

"We were very happy," she says. "He was over there"—gesturing at an imaginary broker's office—and "I was over here, and it was a very nice relationship because you didn't get in each other's hair on business matters."<sup>23</sup>

Adams also demonstrated herself to be a private person, and perhaps her general reserved nature, combined with her wish not to "get in each other's hair," made her protect her husband and their marriage from the glare of the public spotlight. (Some, however, have surmised that her sudden flood of interviews may have been motivated out of a sense of competition, since the previous year had seen the publication and positive reception of Roger Garis' *My Father Was Uncle Wiggily*, in which he wrote of his parents' substantial contributions to the Stratemeyer Syndicate.)

Adams didn't often reveal details about her personal life, but she when she did they could be very touching. In 1977 she told a reporter how she and her husband had met:

I knew him from the time he was a little boy. He had chickens in his backyard and we used to buy eggs and chickens from him. My sister and I used to tease him unmercifully. I don't know why he married me. He's been gone for 11 years.<sup>24</sup>

Almost none of her pre-1960s interviews mentions her children, but after they were adults she frequently spoke of them with pride, and said that she consulted them for information on sports, foreign languages, horseback riding and other subjects that she used as background in her books. Her eleven grandchildren were also frequent subjects of her interviews; she referred to them as "her best critics," saying that they read all her books and made suggestions before publication. A 1975 article reported that Adams

used to gather her youngsters and their friends together every evening and organize a bedtime ritual to entertain them. Each child would think up a topic and she would have to weave a story around it. The older boys would always try to "stick her," so she would leave their topics for last, and then, just when they thought she was stumped, would weave their topics in, too. The next generation of children had the same personal attention, and when her grandchildren and their friends

played the game, things hadn't changed—the older boys were still trying to stick her!<sup>25</sup>

Adams seems to have been genuinely fond of children, and not just her own. Unlike Edward Stratemeyer, who was so shy that he refused to speak before groups of children, Adams often made public appearances and signed books (using a different signature for each of her pseudonyms). When a group of young reporters interviewed her in 1977, they noted that

Harriet Adams turned out to be half business-like and half motherly-like: when we came in, she hugged each one of us and she didn't even know us.<sup>26</sup>

Many other articles about Adams remarked on her patience with children and her affectionate behavior with them. She even allowed school and Scout troops to come to the Stratemeyer Syndicate for field trips. She told the following story in an interview in 1979, when the *Hardy Boys Mysteries* were on television and actor Shaun Cassidy was a teen idol:

"I'll tell you how far the idolatry goes," Mrs. Adams reports. "I had a group of Girl Scouts in my office and one little girl asked if I knew Shaun Cassidy. When I said yes, they all went 'uhhh...' I said, 'I'll show you how he greeted me when I saw him last.' I had one girl stand up and I gave her a big hug and a kiss. I thought that was the end of it, but later when I was autographing books another 11-year-old said to me, 'Which cheek did he kiss you on?' 'This one,' I said. 'You don't mind if I rub it, do you?' she said."<sup>27</sup>

She didn't mind. By all accounts, she never minded the requests her young readers made.

Sometimes Adams could also display a quiet sense of humor. When describing how she based her books on her own travels and adventures, she once declared, "I've almost drowned and almost fallen off a cliff—that all comes in handy."<sup>28</sup> In one article she relayed a remarkable anecdote about a time during World War II when the Stratemeyer Syndicate fell under government suspicion, because its name made it sound like a German spy-ring:

One morning two young gentlemen came to the door and began asking all sorts of questions. I asked them if they were from the FBI and they were surprised that I knew right away. "Well," I told them, "I do write mystery stories, don't I?"<sup>29</sup>

It's rather noteworthy that, without exception, all of Adams' interviewers—even those who dryly castigated her racial attitudes or her innocence about modern society—described her as intelligent, sweet and good-natured.



In the world of series-book collectors and researchers, many have been rather ungenerous in their assessments of Harriet Adams, based primarily on her disingenuous claims to authorship for books she didn't write and on her decision to revise the original, and often better written, texts of her major series. Conversely, she has several devotees as well, and both groups often refuse to acknowledge the parts of her personality that contradict their biases. But neither picture of Adams is accurate alone. Whatever one thinks of her business practices or her personality, she clearly cannot be summed up simply as either a sinner or a saint. Like Walt Whitman—like most of us—she contained multitudes. Reading her own words reflected through thirty-five years of interviews, we can begin to formulate a picture of Harriet Adams that allows for a broader spectrum of interpretations and reactions, one that can balance praise and censure.

The sources cited in this article are studied in greater depth in *Series Books and the Media; or, This Isn't All!, an annotated bibliography of media references to series books*, ed. David Farah and Ilana Nash (Rheem Valley, CA: SynSine Press, 1996).

#### Notes

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2. "Chip Off the Old Block," *Time* 4 Jan. 1954: 66.
3. Ruth Winter, "TV Violence Seen Needless," *Tacoma News Tribune* 6 April 1961: C4.
4. "Harriet Adams," *Contemporary Authors* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1968), vols. 19-20.
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6. This tale first appeared in Ralph Gardner, "Celebrity Collector: Carolyn Keene, A.K.A. Harriet Adams," *Collections Quarterly* Jan. 1979: 46-47.

7. Children's Express, "The Mystery of Nancy Drew," *Murder Ink. The Mystery Reader's Companion*, ed. Dilys Winn (New York: Workman Publishing, 1977) 116-118.
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12. Susan Sherman Fadem, "The Mystery of Carolyn Keene," *St. Louis Globe Democrat* 21 Dec. 1974: 3C.
13. Deborah Felder, "Nancy Drew: Then and Now," *Publisher's Weekly* 30 May 1986: 30-34.
14. Mike McGrady, "The East Orange Gold Mine Mystery," *Newsday's Weekly Magazine* 29 June 1968: 3W+.
15. Elizabeth Stevens, "Bobbsey's [sic] Perennial Favorite," *Long Island Free Press* 1 Oct. 1967: page unknown.
16. Carlette Winslow, "Alias Carolyn Keene," *Suburban Life* Feb. 1968: 40-41.
17. Carol Offen, "The Real Secret of the Hardy Boys, Nancy Drew, the Bobbsey Twins and Tom Swift, Jr.," *Sunday News Magazine* (A New York paper, possibly *Newsday*) 8 April 1979: 8+.
18. Ed Zuckerman, "The Great Hardy Boys Whodunit," *Rolling Stone* 9 Sept. 1979: 36-40.
19. Offen, op. cit.



20. DeWitt, op. cit.

21. For evidence of how unusual Adams' life was, we can compare it to those of her fellow Wellesley alumnae. In 1939 Adams' class had its twenty-fifth reunion, and the organizing committee (of which Adams was chairperson) produced a "yearbook" with updated photos and biographies for each of the class members. Adams appears on page 34 with eight other women, and she is the only one with both a career and a family. Of the other seven, four were housewives and three were unmarried professionals: a doctor, a financial secretary and a librarian.

22. Judy Foreman, "The Saga of a Mysterious Author," *Boston Globe* 3 July 1980: page unknown.

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Carolyn Keene  
Franklin W. Dixon  
Anna Lee Hope

## THE SEARCH FOR STRATEMEYER: The Rosetta Stone

John T. Dizer  
Utica, New York

Picture, if you will, Didi Johnson, Lonni Nash, Kathleen Chamberlain, James Keeline and myself, Jack Dizer, making the most of a rare opportunity to examine the Stratemeyer Archives stored in the depths of the New York Public Library.

The Archives, the rosetta stone for Stratemeyer scholars, are carefully protected, completely uncataloged and thoroughly unavailable to Earnest Seekers after Truth. No one regrets this more than the New York Public Library. As usual, the problem is money. Jim Lawrence, Jr., has been working with the Library for years to identify a corporate sponsor willing to provide the necessary funds to catalog the Archives and thus present them as the rosetta stone or key to the interpretation of the publications of the Stratemeyer Syndicate.

Jim's father, of course, was in-house editor at the Stratemeyer Syndicate. He wrote the majority (and the best) of the Tom Swift Juniors, started the Chris Cool series, wrote some of the Nancy Drew, Hardy Boys, and Bobbsey Twins books and was a major contributor to popular juvenile literature. The Lawrence material is also part of the Archives.

Our group of scholars were invited to inspect but a small portion of the Archives, note the content and significance of same and present our recommendations to the potential sponsor. We came from California, Virginia, Pennsylvania (and by dog sled from upper New York state) looked, gasped, and spoke at great length and with incredible enthusiasm to the longed-for sponsor as well as anyone else who would listen.

The visit to the Archives was a great experience and the reference to it as the rosetta stone for an understanding of the work of Stratemeyer and his Syndicate writers is not at all far-fetched. We are all now convinced that the archives contain incredibly valuable material and have the potential to become a major research facility. The only question is when.

So what did we see?

The records are unbelievably exhaustive. They contain a century's worth of books, artwork, magazines, story papers, correspondence, ledger and ancillary



material. The library brought out four cardboard boxes of material and four framed pieces of artwork from series books. After a quick look at the art, we concentrated on the ledgers and correspondence in the boxes.

We examined all too briefly—Stratemeyer's ledgers from 1889 until his death in 1930. He recorded the titles of every single story he wrote, when and where he wrote it, how much he was paid, and where it was published, and often made special comments. In the first ledger he noted when he became associated with Street and Smith (1892), when he became editor of *Good News* (1893), when his daughter Harriet was born and how much she weighed and so on.

He recorded the stories he wrote for *Good News* and *Young People of America*, and the stories he later bought from other writers. It appears that my insistence on the distinction between Stratemeyer-authored and Stratemeyer-controlled titles has been vindicated. There were numerous stories completely new to us as well as the magazines in which they appeared, magazines hitherto unsuspected as sources for Stratemeyer stories. He noted in some detail both the "Edna Winfield" and "Julia Edwards" stories he wrote and the approximate dates of publication.

The files contained early photos of Stratemeyer and (we think) his wife. There were two photos. One was Stratemeyer. The other was a dark-haired woman in a dark suit with a fur piece or fur collar. We guessed it to be Stratemeyer's wife. There was also, surprisingly, a photo of Horatio Alger, Jr.

The letter files contained frank correspondence between Stratemeyer and George Waldo Browne, Howard R. Garis, Leslie McFarlane, St. George Rathborne, W. Bert Foster and others. There were typescripts of X Bar X Boys stories with Stratemeyer's hand-written notes. There were even rejection notices.

A major find was a scrapbook of material related to Horatio Alger. It contained clippings from the early 1850s of material signed by Alger and "Carl Cantab." Our initial feeling was that it had belonged to Alger himself and may have been given to Stratemeyer by Alger's sister.

Someone of the group found typed manuscripts of two stories begun by Alger and completed by Stratemeyer. The ledgers contained comments by Stratemeyer about the Alger material and this may someday resolve the long-standing controversy about the Alger-Stratemeyer "collaborations."

A fascinating discovery was the 1889 manuscript of "Victor Horton's Idea." It was not written on brown wrapping paper (as received tradition has it) but neatly written in ink on one side of white lined paper. We saw no brown wrapping paper at all in the Archives, but we saw only a fraction of the material

there.<sup>1</sup>

Kathleen found a record from about 1920 of "bad debts" that listed manuscripts paid for and not published. Lonni found a rejection notice from the *Ladies Home Journal* telling Stratemeyer that they were not buying serials at that time. We are not certain of the date. James found correspondence with Leslie McFarlane about a Thomas K. Holmes (Syndicate pseudonym) story, "Mystery Ranch."

In the cold clear light of dawn as this is being written this is only a portion of what I remember seeing. There was more, much more, but the mind can only absorb so much in fifteen minutes.

Remember: until the Archives are cataloged, don't bother the people at the New York Public Library. They can do nothing.

Years ago I wrote a letter supporting an application for a Guggenheim Fellowship to study the Stratemeyer phenomenon. I commented in part:

Edward Stratemeyer, his daughter Harriet Stratemeyer Adams and the Stratemeyer Literary Syndicate were by far the most important influences on juvenile reading for close to 100 years. By extension their influence on American attitudes, tastes, the feminist revolution and, broadly, the "American Dream" is simply incalculable. Nancy Drew, Tom Swift, the Hardy Boys—all Stratemeyer creations—to say nothing of the Bobbsey Twins, the Rover Boys and about 100 other childrens' series were, and in some cases still are, the most popular reading for young people in America. This sociological phenomenon, which it really is, has neither been thoroughly researched nor reported...

These comments are still true. This "sociological phenomenon" cannot be completely researched until the Stratemeyer Archives are cataloged and made available to researchers. Let it be soon.

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1. Editor's Note: As background to the "Victor Horton" mss the Stratemeyer scholars saw: "...when [Stratemeyer] was twenty-five years old he wrote his first long story, 18,000 words. It was written on store wrapping paper. He wasn't satisfied with it, so he laid it aside for a year; then he revised it, copied it on white paper and submitted it to 'Golden Days'..." Irving Kull, ed. *New Jersey: A History. Biographical and Genealogical Records*. Vol. V. NY: American Historical Society, 1930.



## THE SEARCH FOR STRATEMEYER: Twenty Minutes in The Archives

Kathleen Chamberlain  
Emory and Henry College

"Would you be able to go to New York to view a portion of the Stratemeyer Archives?" asked the voice of my Fairy Godmother on the telephone. In reality, the voice was that of Stratemeyer scholar Ilana (Lonni) Nash, but she was as good as a fairy godmother, since she was offering to make one of my wishes come true. (Unfortunately, she was unable to do anything about my wishes to be thinner, prettier, richer, and to win an Olympic gold medal and an Oscar.) But the chance to see even a tiny part of the cache of Stratemeyer papers that has been languishing uncatalogued at the New York Public Library made me forget the other wishes. After much finagling and arranging, I was able to secure the needed funds to spend a glorious day in New York examining enough of the archives to be able to convince a potential donor that a cataloguing grant would be money well spent.

I tried not to hope for too much. After all, the Library has a fair-minded "equal-access" rule, meaning that no one person or group is allowed to work with collections that are not open to everyone. So I knew that, whatever my fantasies, I would not be spending an entire day or even half a day finding one treasure after another. The five consulting scholars in our group would be shown only a small, representative sampling of the collection, just enough to assure ourselves and the money people that the material was indeed of scholarly value. But who knew what wonders that "representative sampling" might contain? Would we see the rumored card file, the one that is alleged to contain lists of who-wrote-what-and-under-what-pseudonym? Would we find Stratemeyer's first story, "Victor Horton's Idea," written on the brown wrapping-paper of legend? Would we see Mildred Wirt's original Nancy Drew manuscripts? Even if the boxes yielded less well known rewards, I knew that when I looked at them, I would feel, in John Keats's immortal words, "like some watcher of the skies / When a new planet swims into his ken."

9:50 a.m., Wednesday, May 29, found me standing next to the stone lions that guard the portals of the New York Public Library, trying not to jump up and down in excitement as I waited to meet the rest of our party for our ten o'clock appointment. Ten o'clock came. . . and went. Likewise 10:15 and 10:30. The others had not arrived. By this time I had twice circled the building looking for (and missing) other entrances; I had asked some guys sweeping the stairs if

they knew anything (they did not); and I had memorized all the many posters and inscriptions that adorn the Library. (Did you know that one of the founders of the NYPL was John Jacob Astor? I wonder if he was the same JJA who went down with the *Titanic*?) At last, the Library opened at 11:00, and I made straight for the Information booth to learn what I could learn. What I learned was that "Information" was a misnomer. For about five minutes I talked at cross-purposes with the singularly uninformative woman staffing the booth. (Me: "I'm here as part of a consulting group. . ." She: "What's the name of the group?" Me: "It doesn't have a name; we're just scholars who. . ." She: "Scholars use the library all the time; they could be anywhere." Me: "No, we had an appointment at 10:00. . ." She: "Honey, you're losing me. The Library doesn't open until 11:00." Me: "I understand that. . . look, maybe I could talk to the head of Special Collections. . ." She: "Yes, we have dozens of Special Collections. . .") Eventually, I wended my way to the man who occupied a cubbyhole labeled "Special Collections." He was more willing than the Gorgon at the Gate, but somehow I couldn't seem to make myself clear to him, either. "Here," he said. "Fill out this request form with the name of the Collection you want." "No, you don't understand," I tried. "The Collection doesn't officially exist yet; I'm here to consult about it. . ." "Have you tried the Rare Books and Manuscripts room?" he asked. Finally! A ray of hope! "That sounds promising," I said eagerly. "Where is it?" "I'll call them for you," he offered and seconds later was saying, "Are the Stratemeyer papers open to the public yet?" "NO!" I nearly shouted (or as nearly as someone raised to believe that libraries mean silence can shout), "They aren't open. That's what I'm here to consult about!" But he wasn't listening; instead, he was saying into the phone, "Hmm. . . yes. . . hmm . . . I see." Then he hung up and said, "Yep, the Stratemeyer party has been there. But they've finished and gone."

Finished? Finished and gone? Arrived and started and finished and gone—without me? For a few seconds I couldn't decide whether murder or tears was the most appropriate response. But in the end I just said "thank you" vaguely and wandered out. I turned the first corner I came to and ran directly into Jack Dizer, Didi Johnson, Lonni Nash, and James Keeline, the lucky other members of my group who had somehow made it to the Promised Land of the Stratemeyer Papers—without me. I consider them all some of my dearest friends, but at this particular moment they probably wouldn't have known that. I was not inclined to be agreeable. In fact, I fear I was somewhat snarly and snappish. But, true to their roles as good friends, they were quite sympathetic and later, after the very kind Jim Lawrence, Jr., and the very helpful Curator

of Rare Books had arranged for me to have a private twenty minutes with one of the Stratemeyer boxes, they all cheerfully waited for me.

I won't detail how Jim managed to get me my twenty minutes of Paradise. Suffice it to say that, at 1:30 p.m., I was sitting in the Rare Books and Manuscripts Room opening a cardboard carton labeled "Stratemeyer." Inside were a series of manila envelopes and four small ledgers. Written on the envelopes was "Misc. Stratemeyer Correspondence. Crumbling." Whoever wrote "crumbling" was not kidding. The brittle papers inside the envelopes were extremely fragile, so much so that I could see no way to remove them without damaging them. So, reluctantly, I put the envelopes aside and turned my attention to the ledgers. Written in Edward Stratemeyer's own hand, these "Literary Account Books" meticulously listed all the titles Stratemeyer had written, how much he had earned, and where each was published. As time went on, he also recorded office expenses, royalties, and payments made to various ghost writers. Volume I covers the years 1889-1900; Volume II covers 1901-1910; and Volumes III and IV cover 1911 to 1928, ending just two years before Stratemeyer's death. (For some unknown reason, I did not copy down the year in which Volume III ended or in which Volume IV began.)

Since the rest of the "consultant" group had already looked through Volume I, I spent most of my time on the other three books. In Volume II, Stratemeyer noted that his *Boys' Life of William McKinley* was written in just a few weeks—September 19th to October 3, 1901. He also included an entry of interest to students of Horatio Alger: "'Adrift in New York' novelized from a play by H. Alger for Mershon. \$250 and five cent royalty. Written May 25-June 10, 1901. Completely rewritten Aug. 1901; renamed 'Nelson the Newsboy.'" Volume III included Tom Swift and other Syndicate titles, although, foolishly, I did not think to look for an explicit indication of exactly when the Syndicate came into being. It was certainly in full swing by 1911, when Stratemeyer wrote, "Total receipts for my own and Syndicate books for 1911: \$27,382.10." "Expenses, 1911" were listed as \$8,251.00, meaning that Stratemeyer had earned \$19,131.10 in that year, no small change in those pre-tax days.

In the entries for 1914, I found the first mention of the names of ghost writers, some of the most eagerly-sought-after Syndicate information. Stratemeyer included this table of payments made in 1914 to:



"Authors, Artists, Proofreaders":

Garis—\$1800

Foster—\$1800

Rathborne—\$600

WJ Cobb—\$150

R Boehm—\$160

R Mencl—\$160

WS Rogers—\$160

[Note - the last three amounts may read \$150; the numbers were slightly smudged]

1919 marked the first appearance of women's names in the "Author" category; Stratemeyer lists "Mrs. E. W. Ward" as receiving \$320 and "Miss J. Lawrence" as receiving \$300. Financial notations show that business was booming for Stratemeyer, even though the rest of the country was poised on the brink of a post-war depression (the same one that ruined Harry Truman's haberdashery business in 1921). The 1919 receipts totaled \$41,896.98.

By 1919, Stratemeyer's handwriting shows a marked deterioration. His early entries are copperplate-clear, but throughout the 1920s, his writing becomes increasingly shakier. Luckily, it remained legible, enabling me to read a fascinating table from 1920:

"Loss on Mss [Manuscripts] paid for and discarded:

'Out of the Storm'	Rathborne	\$150
'Young Builders'	Browne	100
'Bicycle Boys'	Browne	50
'Horner Hill'	Moffatt	100
'Luke the Lion Tamer'	Cobb	100
'Russell Gray's Search'	W White, Jr	100
'Arthur Blaisdell's Choice'	Foster	100

Ledger #4 contained very few notations on its actual pages, but interestingly, Stratemeyer had folded and inserted several separate sheets of paper containing further commentary. My first thought was that he had intended to copy these data into the ledger at a later time, but this explanation seems doubtful, since the sheets include several years' worth of entries. Even if he were ill, a man as organized as Stratemeyer would have found time to recopy the listings if he so desired. Perhaps he simply assumed that the information was safe enough as it was. These folded sheets reaffirm many of the details that we have learned so far from former Syndicate ghosts such as Roger Garis, Leslie McFarlane, and

Mildred Wirt Benson. The first mention of payments to "R. Garis" occurs in 1925; in 1926, Stratemeyer made nine payments to Roger Garis, plus a bonus of \$75. In that same year, Roger's more famous and prolific father, Howard, received 20 payments and a \$100 bonus. "Mildred Augustine" (later Wirt) received one payment of \$125 in 1926. (Though Stratemeyer does not directly say so, it seems likely that each payment, in amounts ranging from \$75 to \$125, represents one manuscript.) The "Author List" of 1928 also contains many names familiar to Stratemeyer scholars: J. W. Duffield, Mrs. E. Ward, J. Lawrence, L. McFarlane, H. Garis, and F. Hopley. By 1928, "M. Augustine" had become "M. Wirt." The only name unfamiliar to me was "H. O. Smith," though I'm hopeful that Jack Dizer or Didi Johnson may know more about this mystery wo/man.

As I read, I was rather surprised to see that Stratemeyer apparently worked with a fairly small stable of ghost writers, most of whom are already known to scholars of the Syndicate and of series books in general. Of course, we do not yet know whether these account ledgers provide a comprehensive record of Stratemeyer's contract writers, but I suspect that probably not too many unknown names remain. Considering that the Syndicate is responsible for many of the most well known children's book characters ever, the limited number of people involved is all the more amazing.

Suddenly, it was 1:50 p.m., and my precious twenty minutes with the collection were over. My wish had ended; I was a pumpkin again (or maybe I was one of the white-rat footmen). As soon as I had left the Rare Book and Manuscript sanctuary, I thought of a dozen Stratemeyer mysteries that the ledgers could perhaps have solved, had I only had more time to think and search. But the answers will remain unknown as long as these very important archives remain uncatalogued and unavailable. The staff at the New York Public Library is eager to allow the public to see the material, but first they must be able to afford an expert archivist who can protect the collection while making it easy to use. The papers are such a significant resource—for collectors, for students of popular culture, for women's and American studies scholars, for historians—that we all lose by their inaccessibility. I can only hope that the "money people" were as impressed as were Jack, Didi, Lonni, James, and I with this invaluable piece of American history and that they will be able to provide the NYPL with the funds it needs.

## THE SEARCH FOR STRATEMEYER: Stratemeyer Syndicate Archives Box 7856; or, What the NYPL Archives Revealed

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Author's note: Special thanks are due to the following people, without whose help this article would not have been possible: Jim Lawrence, Jr.; Mimi Bowling of Special Collections, New York Public Library; the patient staff of the New Jersey Room at the Newark Public Library; and my fellow travelers, Kathleen Chamberlain, Jack Dizer, James Keeline, and Lonni Nash.

Once again a special collection's archival holdings have provided crucial information about previously unsuspected or unverified works by Edward Stratemeyer and the Stratemeyer Syndicate.<sup>1</sup> In this case, the special collection is the New York Public Library's uncatalogued Stratemeyer Syndicate archives: the new information, none other than more about Edward Stratemeyer's early writings.

Currently, archives covering almost 100 years of the Stratemeyer Syndicate's history are kept in storage at the New York Public Library, uncatalogued and completely inaccessible to researchers.<sup>2</sup> As Jack Dizer describes elsewhere in this issue, a small group of Stratemeyer Syndicate researchers traveled to New York to support Jim Lawrence's fund-raising efforts for processing this material. As part of this project, NYPL permitted us about 15 minutes with selected boxes of Syndicate records, and, although the time was far too brief for any but the most frenetic assessment, it confirmed that the archives hold incalculable treasures for those interested in reconstructing Stratemeyer's life and career and reminded us how many lacunae still remain in our histories of Stratemeyer.

One of the first items found in the boxes was a bibliographer's dream: Edward Stratemeyer's handwritten account books from 1889 to 1930, listing the stories he'd written and sold to various publishers. The first ledger covered the period 1889-1900.<sup>3</sup> There, in careful penmanship, entries traced the beginning of Stratemeyer's writing career, adding immeasurably to our knowledge of that period. Indeed, the very first entry contains a revelation. It reads:

Walter Drumm's Heroism written in Maurice's store  
contributed to Young American while I was assistant editor  
Oct-Dec 1889<sup>4</sup>

This not only reconfirms that the tobacco store where Stratemeyer wrote "Victor



Horton's Idea" was Maurice's—for the two stories are from the same period ("Victor Horton's Idea" is actually the next entry)—but also establishes that Stratemeyer had had some experience editing story papers prior to his time at *Good News* and, as an added bonus, introduces a previously unknown Stratemeyer story that predates "Victor Horton's Idea." Since Stratemeyer does not show a payment for "Walter Drumm's Heroism," it may be that he contributed the story as part of his editorial duties or that he was willing to forego payment merely to see his work in print or even that he was somehow involved with the ownership of *Young American* and thus did not receive money for contributing. The account book makes no mention of Stratemeyer's self-published story paper, *Our American Boys* (1883) or the stories therein, possibly because Stratemeyer was publishing it himself and may have viewed it as an amateur effort.

Subsequent entries in the account book contain similar information. Most specify not only the story title and the publisher to whom the material was submitted, but also the place and date the tale was written and the amount received—usually with "paid" added as a notation. They do not, however, provide the date the story was actually published or, in some cases, the name of the publication in which it appeared. Thus, for example, Stratemeyer records that he sold "Billy Bunce," written in 1891, to Street & Smith, but it requires additional research with standard bibliographic sources, such as Edward LeBlanc's *Street & Smith Dime Novel Bibliography: Black and White Era, 1889-1897*, to connect this title with an actual publication (in this case, "Billy Bunce; or, The Most Mischievous Imp in Bunkertown," *Nugget Library* #143, published 13 March 1892).

A hint that Stratemeyer may have felt the importance of maintaining a history of his writing career also emerges occasionally for he supplements some entries with additional comments. For example, "Beyond the Edge of the World, a Prehistorical Romance," an (apparently) unpublished story from 1891, bears the notation "first work on a typewriter". Some entries from 1892 and 1893 interweave information about Stratemeyer's time with Street & Smith, verifying and clarifying his part-time editorial work with the publishing company:

Went to work on Street & Smith's editorial staff on Dec. 12, 1892  
worked 3 weeks / paid \$80 / paid in full \$120

Editorial work, odd days, amounting to two weeks, to August 7th  
[1893] for Street & Smith. Paid \$80

---

Took editorship of 'Good News' (3 days per week) and one serial constantly running, at salary of \$50 weekly. Commencing Oct. 23, 1893 [a later entry links "Shorthand Tom" to this agreement]

Yet another entry, from 1895, indicates that Stratemeyer accepted the editorship of *Young Sports of America* on 1 May 1895 "on speculation". Touchingly, amid the records of editorial work and stories marketed, Stratemeyer also took time to include a (presumably) more important event: "Baby girl Harriet born Sunday, December 11, 1892, at 8:40 a.m. Weight 8 3/4 lbs."

In addition to revealing Stratemeyer's editorial salary, the archives also provide information about the different rates publishers paid him for stories. In interviews, Stratemeyer frequently touted the \$75 he earned from Elverson when "Victor Horton's Idea" appeared in *Golden Days*—but failed to mention that he received considerably more for later stories in *Golden Days* and considerably less from other publishers. While Elverson usually paid Stratemeyer \$150-\$200 for serials such as "Judge Dockett's Grandson" and "Captain Bob's Secret," Street and Smith purchased "Jack the Inventor" for *Good News* for only \$140, Munro acquired "May Lillie" for *Golden Hours* for \$100, and Beadle and Adams paid only \$25 apiece for two Ned St. Meyer stories for *Banner Weekly*, "Plucky Dan, the Boy Spy-Detective" and "Idaho Matt, the Boy Avenger"—and apparently waited almost three years to use the latter. Judging by the account books, dime novels sold for less than serials and—at Street & Smith, at least—different dime novel series employed different pay scales. Stratemeyer's two "Match" stories for the 16-page *Nugget Library* earned him \$75 each, but "The Fourfold Murder" for the 16-page *Nick Carter Library* sold for only \$50. Then, as now, adult fiction appears to have been more lucrative than stories for children or adolescents, for the highest payment (of those jotted in my notes) was for a Julia Edwards romance serialized in the *New York Weekly*: Stratemeyer received \$240, paid in several installments. The account book also shows that Stratemeyer was willing to write for considerably less on occasion: it is sprinkled with titles of short stories sold to the *Newark Sunday Call* for only \$10 apiece; the canny Stratemeyer later recycled several of these in *Bright Days* and/or *Young People of America*.

Of greatest interest—to this bibliographer, at least—were particulars about previously unconfirmed or unsuspected works by Stratemeyer. The account book offers an abundance of such information, some of which was later supplemented by a trip to the New Jersey Room at the Newark Public Library. In *The House*

of *Beadle and Adams*, Albert Johannsen hypothesizes that Stratemeyer used the pseudonym Ned St. Meyer for two stories in *Banner Weekly*; the archival material confirmed this, as well as Jack Dizer's hypothesis that Stratemeyer authored "Flyer Fred," an early Roy Rockwood serial that also ran in *Banner Weekly*. Similarly, in *The Fiction Factory*, Quentin Reynolds mentions that Stratemeyer "was writing serials aimed at women for the [New York] *Weekly* under the name of Julie [sic] Edwards" in the 1890s. Unfortunately for Stratemeyer bibliographers, for much of the 1890s almost every issue of the *Weekly* carried a Julia Edwards serial; moreover, stories under the Street & Smith house name Julia Edwards can be found in the *Weekly* as early as 1877 and as late as 1907. The account book entries now pinpoint three Julia Edwards serials written by Stratemeyer and published between 1894-96 (although others may be listed in entries after mid-1897, my stopping point).

Other account book entries from 1891 to mid-1897 show that Stratemeyer's early years were even more productive than existing histories indicate, for they identify over thirty new Stratemeyer stories. This new material includes two previously unsuspected Stratemeyer titles sold to the *Chicago Ledger* (an adult story paper similar to the *New York Weekly*) and at least nineteen stories purchased by the *Newark Sunday Call* (a newspaper that included some short fiction). Stratemeyer's list of fiction written for *Young Sports of America* (a boys' story paper) names six serials not previously attributed to him<sup>2</sup>; his list also refers to "'Ed Ward' tales," presumably meaning other *Young Sports* stories published under the Ed Ward pseudonym, thus adding a few more items to the total.<sup>3</sup> Several other new stories—sold to a variety of publications, including the Baptist Publishing Society's *Our Boys and Girls*—are also recorded in the account book. Additionally, tracing the publication history of the *Newark Sunday Call* and *Young Sports of America* material uncovered eight new Stratemeyer pseudonyms: Fred Frisky, Revell Pinkerton, Larry Mack, and Old Sport from *Young Sports of America*; Edna Phillips from the *Newark Sunday Call*; Ralph Hemington, Clara A. Perry, and A. L. Thompson on *Bright Days* reprints of *Newark Sunday Call* stories.

What do the new stories add to our knowledge of Stratemeyer's early writings? Primarily, they show Stratemeyer was selling genre stories to a wider market than previously assumed and trying some genres slightly earlier than previously recorded. For example, a *Newark Sunday Call* story from 1895, "Saved from Death: An Incident of George Washington's Boyhood," predates both "Estelle, the Little Cuban Rebel" (1896) and *Under Dewey at Manila* (1898), thus becoming Stratemeyer's earliest foray into historical fiction—and

perhaps indicating an early interest in George Washington, whom Stratemeyer later lionized in the Colonial War series. The two Ned St. Meyer detective stories Stratemeyer sold to Beadle and Adams for *Banner Weekly* in 1891 appear to be among his first efforts in that genre, while "Powder Mills Detective" for the *Chicago Ledger* and his sleuthing stories (under the aptly-chosen pseudonym Revell Pinkerton) for *Young Sports of America* come out of the same period as his Nick Carter mysteries for Street & Smith and Old Cap Collier detective fiction for Munro. Similarly, Stratemeyer wrote Julia Edwards romances for the *New York Weekly* during 1894-1896; by 1895 (and possibly earlier), he was selling Edna Winfield romances to the *Chicago Ledger*; by 1897, he'd expanded his market for this genre to include the *Newark Sunday Call*.<sup>1</sup>

Stratemeyer's versatility remains evident in the new fiction. He fashioned some *Sunday Call* tales around holidays, highlighting everything from Washington's Birthday and the Fourth of July to Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Other *Call* pieces show Stratemeyer writing about some of his favorite topics, albeit in abbreviated form: "Dan's Battery" features a young boy delighted by technology, a precursor (of sorts) of Tom Swift; "Ghost of Flydown Hill," "Something That Happened," and "How Burd Saved Them" recount tales of boys and bicycles, reminiscent of Stratemeyer's Jack and Jerry dime novels, from approximately the same period ("Burd" also depicts tradition-bound adults belatedly acknowledging the value of "newfangled machines," a popular theme in Stratemeyer's later fiction); "Dick's Adventure," "Ice Boat Zip," and "Proving His Worth" are all boys' outdoor or sports stories, covering hunting, iceboating, and baseball, respectively. A few stories even contain atypical material: "Christmas at Gradley Farm" is an unusually sentimental tale about a miser who rediscovers the joys of Christmas and generosity because of the young orphan boy who works for him, while "The Man Who Moved Next Door" employs an older woman (or, as Stratemeyer puts it, "an old maid") as the first-person narrator—one of the only times Stratemeyer tried this narrative voice. Unfortunately for those wishing to sample more of Stratemeyer's early fiction, there are apparently no known copies of *Young Sports of America* extant, so such tantalizingly-titled tales as "Nellie Ray, Queen of the Newsboys" and "Dashing Dave, the Young Sport Detective" will remain mysteries unless copies turn up among the Syndicate archives.

Reading an early draft of this article, Randy Cox remarked "You discovered all that in only 15 minutes? What if they'd given you a whole hour?" What if, indeed? That 15 minutes was enough to show us that Stratemeyer was writing for markets we'd never suspected, that he was even more prolific than we'd



imagined, and that the stories about his keeping a careful account of his sales were, thankfully, true. It was also enough time for us to realize that much more remains to be learned about Stratemeyer's life and work. At this point, all we can do is imagine what discoveries more time in the archives could yield and hope that, someday soon, the archives will be catalogued and available for research, allowing us to explore their riches and use them to develop more accurately the history of Stratemeyer and his literary Syndicate.

### NEW STORIES—ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY

#### **BANNER WEEKLY (Beadle and Adams)**

"Flyer Fred, the Cyclist Ferret; or, Running Down the Rough and Ready Rascals" by Roy Rockwood (12 Sept. - 17 Oct. 1896)

Reprinted in *Beadle's Half-Dime Library* #1047 (17 Aug 1897)

"Idaho Matt, the Boy Avenger; or, Trapping the Eagle Mountain Dozen" by Ned St. Meyer (7 July - 18 Aug 1894) [listed in account book as "Mountain Matt's Discovery"]

Reprinted as "Detective Matt's Man Hunt; or, Downing the Desperate Dozen" in *Beadle's Half-Dime Library* #1017 (19 Jan 1897)

"Plucky Dan, the Boy Spy Detective, or, A Greenhorn on Guard. The Story of What a Foundling Found" by Ned St. Meyer (11 June - 16 July 1892) [listed in account book as "Plucky Dan, the Foundling Boy Detective"]

Reprinted in *Beadle's Half-Dime Library* #976 (7 April 1896)

#### **CHICAGO LEDGER**

"Driven to Sin" [no publication information available; written 1895]

"Powder Mills Detective" [no publication information available; written ca1897]

"Temptations of a Great City" [no publication information available; written June 1896; probably published as by Edna Winfield] <sup>8</sup>

Reprinted as *Temptations of a Great City; or, The Love That Lived Through All* in Mershon's *Holly Library* #154 (3 July 1899) as by Edna Winfield and in Mershon's *Edna Winfield* series as *The Temptations of a Great City*

"Zilla, the Conjuror's Daughter" [no publication information available; written 15 Feb - 5 Mar 1895; probably published as by Edna Winfield] <sup>9</sup>

Probably reprinted as *Because of Her Love for Him; or, The Mystery of a Spell* in Mershon's *Holly Library* #158 (3 Sept. 1899) as by Edna Winfield and in Mershon's *Edna Winfield* series as *Because of Her Love for Him* <sup>10</sup>

#### **NEW YORK WEEKLY (Street & Smith)**

Note: Julia Edwards is listed as the author of all three stories; Julia Edwards is a Street & Smith house name shared by several writers

"Only a Country Girl; or, Little Nellie's City Lovers, False and True."

(28 March 1896 - ??)

Reprinted as *New Eagle Series #997* (Dec. 1917)

"They Fell in Love at the Sea Shore: An Absorbing Romance of Love and Mystery."  
(9 June-25 Aug. 1894)

"Trixie's Lovers; or, A Strange Wooing." (28 Dec. 1895 - 14 March 1896)

### **NEWARK SUNDAY CALL**

Note. "Edward Stratemeyer" is listed as the author of all *Sunday Call* stories unless otherwise noted.

"Ben's Burglar: A Thanksgiving Story for the Young People" (25 Nov. 1894)

"Christmas at Gradley Farm" (20 Dec. 1896)

"Curious Case" [written May 1892; no publication information available]

"Davy's Christmas" [written Nov. 1891 or 1896; no publication information available]

"Dick's Adventure" (3 Nov. 1895)

Reprinted in chapter 28 of *Gun and Sled* as by Captain Ralph Bonehill <sup>11</sup>

"Dan's Battery: A Washington's Birthday Story for Young People" (21 Feb. 1897)

"Dodd's Easter Romance" by Edna Winfield (18 April 1897) <sup>12</sup>

"Double Danger" by E. L. Stratemeyer (14 Feb. 1897)

"The Ghost of Flydown Hill" (21 Oct. 1894)

Reprinted in *Young Sports of America #23* (2 Nov. 1895); also in chapter 12 of *Gun and Sled* as by Captain Ralph Bonehill

"How Burd Saved Them" (5 May 1895)

Reprinted in *Bright Days #5* (Aug. 1896) as by Ed Ward.

"Ice Boat Zip" (3 Feb. 1895)

Reprinted in *Bright Days #1* (April 1896) as "Ice Boat Scud" by A. L. Thompson; also in chapter 21 of *Gun and Sled* as by Captain Ralph Bonehill

"Jimmie's Reward: A Christmas Story for Young People" (23 Dec. 1894)

"A Longed for Adventure: A Decoration Day Story for Young People" (29 May 1892)

"Lost on a Roof: Uncle Dave's Remarkable Experience During a Snow Storm" No author. (17 Jan. 1897)

"A Lucky Explosion: An Independence Day Story for Young People" (3 July 1892) [title listed in account book as "Tidy Explosion"]

Reprinted in *Young Sports of America #7* (13 July 1895) as "A Lucky Explosion: A Fourth of July Story" as by Ed Ward; also in *Bright Days #4* (July 1896) as "The Fowler Boys' Fourth and What Came of It" as by Ed Ward

"The Man Who Moved Next Door" (2 May 1897)

"On Sam's Point" [the ledger notes that a "revised" version from 1892 was sold to the *Newark Sunday Call*; publication information not known]

Reprinted in *Good News* (24 Nov. 1894); in *Young Sports of America #4* (22 June 1895) as by Ed Ward; also in *Bright Days #3* (June 1896) as "Double Adventure" as by Clara A. Perry; also in chapter 19 of *Gun and Sled* as by

**Captain Ralph Bonchill**

"Polly's Scheme: An Old Fashioned Love Story" by Edna Phillips (14 March 1897)

"Proving His Worth" (30 March 1895)

"Saved from Death: An Incident of George Washington's Boyhood Days" (21 Feb. 1895)

"Something That Happened" (4 April 1897)

**NUGGET LIBRARY (Street & Smith)**

"Billy Bunce; or, The Most Mischievous Imp in Bunkertown" by Peter Pad #143 (13 March 1892)

**YOUNG SPORTS OF AMERICA (Frank J. Earll) <sup>13</sup>**

"Dashing Dave, the Young Sport Detective; or, Tracked from New York to San Francisco" by Revell Pinkerton #1-4 (25 May - 22 June 1895)

"Dick Dart's Wall Street Case; or, Tracking the Twenty Million Dollar Bank Robbers" by Revell Pinkerton #10-15 (9 Aug. - 7 Sept. 1895)

"Fat Boy's Club" by Fred Frisky #1-6 (25 May - 6 July 1895)

"Nellie Ray, Queen of the Newsboys, or, Stout Hearts Beneath Rags and Tatters" by Larry Mack #12-17 (17 Aug. - 21 Sept. 1895)

"Shortstop Herman Long of the Bostons; or, A Great Player's Life On and Off the Field" by Old Sport #14-19 (31 Aug. - 5 Oct. 1895)

"Young Cup Defenders" by Ralph Bonchill #16-21 (14 Sept. - 19 Oct. 1895)

The account book also notes that Stratemeyer wrote "Ed Ward" tales" for *YSOA*. The following Ed Ward stories appeared in *YSOA*:

"Andy the Life Saver; or, Rescued from the Ocean" #8 (20 July 1895)

"Jack and Sandy" [written Nov. 1891, possibly first sold to the *Sunday Call*] #2 (8 June 1895)

Also published in *Bright Days* #2 (May 1896) as by Edward Ward

"A Lucky Explosion: A Fourth of July Story" #7 (13 July 1895)

[see listing under *Newark Sunday Call* for additional information]

"On Sam's Point" #4 (22 June 1895)

[see listing under *Newark Sunday Call* for additional information]

"A Terrible Bear Fight. Grandpa Brown's Thanksgiving Story for Boys" #28 (7 Dec. 1895)

**OTHER STORIES LINKED TO PUBLISHERS IN THE ACCOUNT BOOKS**

"Adrift in Hawaiian Waters" [written ca1897 for "Forward" of Philadelphia]

"Brown's Girl in Venne" [or "in Venice"] [written Christmas 1894; sold to "Town Topics"]

"Chesterbrook Mystery" [written Jan 1895; sold to Street & Smith]

"Len's Other Side" [written Feb. 1897; sold to the Baptist Publishing Society for "Our Boys and Girls"]

"Walter Drumm's Heroism" [written Oct. – Dec. 1889 for the *Young American*]

### NOTES

1. For other instances of such discoveries, see John T. Dizer's "Street & Smith Box M58" in *DNRU* 46 (August 1977): 78-84 and James Keeline's "The Secret of Box MSS 107, or, What the Nancy Axelrad Papers Revealed" in *Newsboy* 32 (Jan-Feb 1994; May-June 1994): 11-19; 11-16.

2. Syndicate researchers and interested others should be aware that the NYPL will not permit access to this material nor can it answer questions about items in the archives (because they are uncatalogued, stored off-site, and thus virtually inaccessible). This excursion was permitted only because we were part of a fund-raising effort, and it was felt that seeing samples of material from the archives would allow us to speak more knowledgeably of the archives' value. Even so, NYPL was most careful to allow us only very brief access. They were gracious enough to give us permission to write about the event in order that others might share in the discoveries, but urged us to make it clear that the material is *not available yet and will not be available until catalogued* and that calling and asking for special permission to see the archives would be an exercise in futility.

3. Information about the ending date of the account book comes from Kathleen Chamberlain, who generously shared her notes. All information about the *Chicago Ledger* version of "Temptations of a Great City," listed in the bibliography above, is also courtesy of Kathleen and her notes.

4. As Jack Dizer has noted elsewhere in this issue, I spent most of the allotted time with the archives frenziedly copying information from the earliest account book. To cover as much as possible, I abbreviated words and phrases throughout and did not always strive for exact quotes; consequently the quoted material here is the best reconstruction from my notes but may not always be an exact transcription of the original.

5. One item on the list, "Young Cup Defenders," should have been recognized earlier for it appears under the Ralph Bonehill pseudonym.

6. The last line of Stratemeyer's list of stories written for *Young Sports of America* merely reads "Additional stories, 2 pgs." thus leaving a few bibliographic puzzles to ponder.

7. The *Chicago Ledger* stories also clarify an anomaly in Stratemeyer's publishing history—the sudden appearance, in 1899, of six full-length Edna Winfield romances, published in Mershon's paperback *Holly Library* series during a three-month period. At least two of these novels can now be traced back to a prior appearance in the *Ledger*.

8. Another Edna Winfield story from 1897 appeared with a note linking the pseudonym to "Zilla" and "Temptations"; see also notes 3 and 12.

9. See notes 8 and 12.

10. Mershon's advertisement for *Because of Her Love for Him* states that "the heroine is a conjuror's daughter".



11. *Gun and Sled* is one of Stratemeyer's more extreme examples of recycling fiction, for roughly one fifth of the story is actually previously published short stories, often inserted verbatim into the text. In the Donohue edition, pages 68-74 are actually "My First and Last Bear," originally published in *Bright Days* as by Ed Ward; pages 102-108 and 115-123 are from chapters 4-8 of "Camp and Diamond," originally published in *Bright Days* as by Captain Ralph Bonehill; pages 108-114 are from "On Sam's Point" (listed above under *Newark Sunday Call*); pages 123-132, from "Ice Boat Zip" (listed above under *Newark Sunday Call*); pages 137-47, from "Ghost of Flydown Hill" (listed above under *Newark Sunday Call*); pages 181-191, from "Dick's Adventure" (listed above under *Newark Sunday Call*). Pages 164-172 contain a short story narrated by one of the boys that is completely unrelated to the events in the book and thus probably from another, as yet unidentified, source, and it is possible that other passages in the book also were first published in another form.

12. Actually, "Dodd's Easter Romance" wasn't listed in my notes from the account book (it may not have been in the pages examined), but turned up in a search of the *Sunday Call*. It is linked to Stratemeyer via the notice "Written Expressly for the *Sunday Call* by Edna Winfield, Author of 'Zilla, the Conjuror's Daughter,' 'Temptations of a Great City,' Etc., Etc." "Zilla" and "Temptations" are both listed in the account book.

13. Bibliographic information for *Young Sports of America* stories is from an unpublished bibliographic listing by J. P. Guinon.

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Recent books in review, or forthcoming publications noted

## GIRLS OF THE GOLDEN SERIES

Sherric Inness. *Intimate Communities: Representation and Social Transformation in Women's College Fiction, 1895-1910*. Bowling Green State U Popular P, 1995. 192 pp. ISBN 0-87972-683-0. \$29.95 cloth; ISBN 0-87972-684-9 \$13.95 paper.

Shirley Marchalonis. *College Girls: A Century in Fiction*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1995. 203 pp. ISBN 0-8135-2176-9. \$16 paper.

The genre of women's/girls' college fiction is a fascinating one that has long been overlooked, so the appearance of these two books is welcome. Since much college fiction appeared in series, both these titles should interest series-book enthusiasts. Though Inness focuses on a shorter time span than Marchalonis (who examines books from 1870-1930), both unsurprisingly treat many of the same series, such as Helen Grant (by Amanda O. Douglas; 9 vols.; 1903-1911), Betty Wales (by "Margaret Warde"; 8 vols., 1904-1911), Grace Harlowe (by "Jessie Graham Flower"; 7 vols., 1914-1917); and Jane Allen (by "Edith Bancroft"; 5 vols., 1917-1922). Both books examine some similar topics: girls' "crushes" on other girls, attitudes toward wealth and social status, and so on. Inness also includes a fascinating chapter on girls' sports.

Inness's book is organized by topics; Marchalonis's is more or less chronological, an organization necessitated by her interesting thesis, which is that early college fiction presents college as a "green world," an isolated but nurturing community of women that is almost utopian. As the twentieth century progresses, and college for women becomes more accepted and more diverse, this "green world" is gradually lost. By the 1920s, Marchalonis argues, college fiction shows that these early, supportive communities have become distorted and fragmented.

The main difficulty with Marchalonis's book is one that plagues many mainstream academics who write about popular culture: she makes historical and analytical errors because she either ignores or is unaware of valuable (but non-mainstream) resources such as *Dime Novel Round Up*, *Yellowback Library*, and *Newsboy*. This problem is most obvious when Marchalonis deals with juvenile series, which as a rule receive little attention in traditional academic sources. For instance, she examines both the Grace Harlowe series, by "Jessie Graham Flower," and the Marjorie Dean series, by "Pauline Lester." As collectors who have read these series know, some of the plots in the Marjorie Dean stories (1917-1922) are strikingly similar to those in the Grace Harlowe books. Marchalonis explains these connections by saying, "Probably Lester read Flower" (190). But as articles in both *Yellowback* and *DNRU* (and elsewhere) have shown, "Lester" and "Flower" were the same person—Josephine Chase, who probably also wrote some of the

Jane Allen college books (as well as numerous other series, including some for boys.) This fact weakens Marchalonis's argument, since she believes she is citing evidence from three different authors when in reality she is using only one.

In the case of "Flower" and "Lester," Marchalonis mistakes pseudonyms for real people, but elsewhere, she reverses the error, assuming that a genuine name is in fact a pseudonym. When writing of the Beverly Gray series, Marchalonis says the books are by "an author who signs herself Clair Blank" (110). Granted, the name "Blank" does sound suspiciously phony, but again, a simple trip through the files of *Yellowback Library* would have revealed a useful and thorough article on Clair Blank by Sue Grossman.

In the past, one could perhaps argue that specialist magazines such as *DNRU* and *Yellowback* were too obscure to be readily located by scholars, but such is no longer the case. Both *DNRU* and *Newsboy* are indexed in the *MLA Annual Bibliography*, and many of our "hobbyist" magazines have been cited in scholarly books and journals. The information is also available in academic collections of juvenile series, such as those at the University of Minnesota and the University of South Florida. Ideally, mainstream scholars will eventually begin paying more attention to the hobbyists (as Sherrie Inness has done) and vice versa. The result will be additional interesting scholarship for all.

Kathleen Chamberlain

## A READER'S GUIDE TO SERIES WRITING

David Farah and Ilana Nash. *Series Books and the media; or, This Isn't All! An Annotated Bibliography of Secondary Sources*. SynSine Press, Rheem Valley/Old Tappan, 1996. viii, 388. Available from SynSine Press, Box 6422, Rheem Valley, CA 94570. \$67.95.

This is the first annotated bibliography of series-related material ever published and, as such, it is an impressive work. Arranged chronologically, it provides citations and annotations for over 500 books, articles, and ads published from 1903-1989. Appendices cover "orphan" articles (those with no citations), a few primary documents (such as the letter from Stratemeyer to Grosset & Dunlap proposing the Hardy Boys series), series-related fiction, and additional resources; an index identifies subjects, authors, and article titles.

The body of the work includes well-known items and more esoteric material, but—because of space considerations—excludes most articles from series-related magazines such as *DNRU* and *Yellowback Library*. Press kits from the Nancy Drew movies, teen magazine articles about the 1970s Hardy Boys/Nancy Drew TV series, early interviews with Edward Stratemeyer—all in a lively, readable style, the annotations make this book a reader's and a researcher's delight: they provide significant facts, information, and excerpts from the articles; cross-references to related annotations; and cautions about erroneous or conflicting information. Indeed, so detailed are they that one could almost write a history of the Stratemeyer Syndicate solely from reading this book.

As is to be expected with such an ambitious project, there are some problems and omissions. The introduction notes that most material pertains to the Stratemeyer Syndicate and it does: many series book authors are not mentioned at all (among them such well-known figures as Hal Goodwin, Annie Fellows Johnston, and Josephine Chase), nor are there entries for 19th-century authors or series except in relation to Stratemeyer. Even the Stratemeyer Syndicate materials have some surprising omissions, including items mentioned in the bibliographies of some of the articles discussed.

Despite these problems, *Series Books and the media* is a significant contribution to series book scholarship. It should prove invaluable to the novice or the serious Stratemeyer researcher or to any academic library dealing with the history of children's literature or with children's popular culture.

Deidre A. Johnson

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Just got the latest *DNRU* and enjoyed it as usual. Especially liked the listing of subscribers.

I do take issue with Didi Johnson's review of Bob Cook's Tom Swift book. I've read it and find it to be an over-priced, self-serving love letter to himself and useless as research material. Everything in the book screams out "Look at me! Look at me! I've got a big Tom Swift collection!" There is no new information included with the dubious exception of the book inscriptions section which bored me beyond endurance. There are errors and omissions which, to me, indicate a total lack of research. This is odd as Mr. Cook has been working on this book for years and should have got it right by now. All the letters published within the book serve only to portray Mr. Cook in the best possible light and are of absolutely no interest to any other person. Instead of meaningful information about the characters and plots and locales (such as in Crawford's *The Lost Hardys*, *A Concordance*) we get Mr. Cook's opinions on how great the books look on his book shelf and his wildly inflated estimates on the value of the books. I wonder if Mr. Cook ever read *any* of these books or does he consider them to be mere *collectibles* to be seen and not read? The only saving grace was the two excellent color photos of the covers but this can hardly justify the ludicrous \$45.00 price. I have both of Didi's books and consider them to be some of the finest examples of serious research into the juvenile book genre and was very surprised to find her authoring such a puff piece review.

Robert W. Finnan  
Malverne, NY

Didi replies: Bob is right that I should have commented on the price, given the slimness of the book (though the number of pages is noted in the citation); privately-published fan publications do tend to be high-priced and I failed to point out that the price-per-page ratio here is higher than most.



Other than that, I think we see the book and its audience differently. Cook pulls together bibliographic information from a variety of sources, providing a convenient guide to format—along with the two photographs for reference—for the novice collector; I assumed the more experienced collector would find the information about format changes and foreign editions of use and the time line, letters, and Brey interview of added interest.

Cook's references to secondary sources—the bibliography, the excerpts—are helpful to beginning researchers of Tom Swift (and perhaps I should have specified "beginning"); the inscription and letters strike me as having great potential for anyone engaged in reader-response theory pertaining to series books. As Bob notes, the book doesn't contain much information about the contents of the series—but Cook doesn't claim it does, not *does* my review; as a reviewer, I try to evaluate the book the author has written, not what another author might have created.

Nonetheless, *DNRU* is always interested in different viewpoints and appreciates responses to reviews and articles. Bob's comments also bring up a good point about the potential for other books about Tom Swift; I look forward to seeing more series-related publications.

## NOTES & QUERIES

**More Seltzer Films.** Victor Berch writes to add to the list of films based on Charles Alden Seltzer's westerns that Charlie Shibuk sent in last time: *The Boss of the Lazy Y* (Triangle, 1915); *The Coming of the Law* (Fox, 1919); *Fame and Fortune* (Fox, 1919), based on the story *Slow Burgess*; *Forbidden Trails* (Fox, 1920); *Rough Shod* (Fox, 1922), based on the story "West!"; *Treat 'Em Rough* (Fox, 1919), based on the story "The Two-Gun Man". *Brass Commandments* (Fox, 1923) was remade as *Chain Lightning* (Fox, 1927). He corrects our editorial typos in the previous list by saying that *Firebrand Trevison* should read *Firebrand Trevison* and that the date of *The Range Boss* (Essanay, 1912) should read 1917.

**Stratemeyer Syndicate Authors.** John Enright sent in a number of observations about Stratemeyer and the Syndicate. We have room for only some this time. "**Walter Karig** (Nov. 13, 1898-Sept. 30, 1956) ... wore many hats: as an ex-naval officer, he served as technical director of NBC's 'Victory at Sea'; as a sportswriter, he worked for the Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot*; as a critic, he wrote many book reviews for the *New York Times*; as a freelance, he placed articles in the *Saturday Evening Post* and in the London *Evening Star*; as a novelist, he came out with *Neely* and *Battle Submerged*; and on the side, for Stratemeyer, he doctored Nancy Drew and wrote the best of her (*The Password to Larkspur Lane* and *The Sign of the Twisted Candles*) and produced the top Dana [Girls] title, *The Secret at the Hermitage*; he also batted out more routine entries for Doris Force and the X Bar X gang. **Walter Bertram Foster** (Nov. 3, 1869-April 26, 1929) was born in Providence, RI. He signed his own name to such epics as *The Lost Galleon* (1901) and *The Ocean Express* (1913). To quote Deidre Johnson in *Edward*



*Stratemeyer and the Stratemeyer Syndicate* (1993) 'W. Bert Foster was the shaping force...behind...the Corner House Girls.' Foster's co-worker, **St. George Henry Rathborne**, was born in Covington, KY, on the day after Christmas in 1854. He died Dec. 16, 1928. Possibly you have read his 1884 dime novel *Roaring Ralph Rockwood, the Reckless Ranger* or *The Marked Moccasin* (1878), *Pittsburgh Landing* (1883), *A Goddess of Africa* (1897), or *A Texan Thoroughbred* (1912)." He also says (we are paraphrasing here) that Stratemeyer employed most of the Garis clan (Howard, Roger and Lilian) and that later writers for the Syndicate included Mildred Wirt Benson (see her comments in the Applewood reprints of the Nancy Drew books), S. Omar Barker, Andrew Edward Svenson, James Duncan Lawrence, Jack Pearl (*The Mystery of the Whale Tattoo*, 1968, for the Hardy Boys), Iris Vinton and Margaret Beebe.

**Calamity Jane.** Professor Richard W. Etulain (Center for the American West, Dept. of History, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131) writes that he is working on a book about Calamity Jane and is looking for copies in good condition of several of Edward L. Wheeler's Deadwood Dick stories which feature Calamity Jane ("Captain Crackshot, the Girl Brigand", "Deadwood Dick's Big Deal," "Deadwood Dick's Claim," "Deadwood Dick's Diamonds," and "Deadwood Dick's Dust"). He also needs Reckless Ralph's "Calamity Jane, Queen of the Prairies" from *Street and Smith's New York Weekly* (1882) and Prentiss Ingraham's *Buffalo Bill and Calamity Jane* from *Buffalo Bill Stories* (no. 386) and *New Buffalo Bill Weekly* (no. 177). Anyone with fresh information on Calamity Jane in dime novels or pulp fiction is asked to write Prof. Etulain. Further bibliographic details of these dime novels can be supplied.

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**In Memoriam.** Word has reached us of the death of Arthur Sherman of Arizona. Art was well known as a collector of Tom Swift and Gilbert Patten and his imaginative full page advertisements have been a familiar feature of *Dime Novel Round-Up* and other collector publications. Those who were fortunate to know him or to be the recipient of his frequent telephone calls know how much he gave to this field as a collector and enthusiast. Those who knew him the longest can attest to his generosity toward his fellow collectors. He was a staunch supporter of this publication. That support was representative of the spirit that kept us going during the months of transition. He will be missed.

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